

SR/DOB/59/ 1417

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2 February 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, SR/COP/PI

SUBJECT : De-briefing of a Recent Byelorussian
Emigre by AEPRIMER/1.

1. AEPRIMER/1 brought to the attention of the SR/DOB Ukrainian/Byelorussian Case Officer the fact that he had heard that an elderly woman, recently emigrated to the States, had information concerning the fate of [] which was at decided variance with the SOVIET version of the demise of the [] as published in "Quadrant B-52". In expectation of ascertaining the true facts, and with the hope that one of the [] might still be alive, the Case Officer directed AEPRIMER/1 to proceed to the Source's place of residence and to de-brief her as to the [] and also as to any other items of intelligence interest at her disposal.

2. The de-briefing took place on 2, and 3 January 1959. Source lived in NOVOGRODEK, BYELORUSSIA until February 1957, at which time she moved to POLAND. She arrived in the United States from POLAND on November 1958. Source is 68 years old, has a high school education. She made a living by speculation and by keeping house for Soviet officers billeted in her home. She was arrested by the MVD in 1947 and spent six months in KAZAKHSTAN. Her husband was arrested by the MVD in 1946, released in 1951, and died in 1956.

3. The information as contained in the attachments was obtained by the Source through personal experience. The original from which this information was extracted may be found in the AEPRIMER/1 File, SR/DOB.

Chief, SR/DOB

ATTACHMENTS: (6)

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3828
NAZI WAR CRIMES CLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

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ATTACHMENT 1

Source states that on or about 26 August 1954, a Soviet Officer with the rank of Major drove up to her house in a motorcycle side-car and asked for a room. Source told the Major that she had nothing at that time but that she expected one of the three officers at her home, two lieutenants and a surgeon, to leave in a few days and that the Major could come back then.

The face of the Major seemed a familiar one to the Source but she could not place it. The Major asked Source about her husband and children. From the manner in which the Major put his questions and from the questions themselves, Source deduced that the Major was not merely another Soviet Major but one who knew quite a lot about her family. The Major left her house stating that he would return but he did not.

At that time, August-September 1954, the Soviet Army was holding maneuvers in the NOVOGRODEK province. Source states that more military units with heavy equipment passed through NOVOGRODEK than had passed through during World War II. (AEPRIMER/1 states this may probably have been the result of the uprisings in Germany in 1953, at which time Soviet units from Byelorussia and the Ukraine were moved into East Germany. Quite possibly the units going into NOVOGRODEK were to replace those moved into East Germany).

Source states that she heard rumors in the city of NOVOGRODEK and more especially she heard the officers living in her home say that American paratroopers had wounded the Commander-in-Chief of the maneuvers, Marshal TIMOSHENKO, killed several high ranking Soviet officers, and wounded many more. These killings occurred two days after the visit of the Major to Source's home. It had been discovered that one of the persons involved in the shooting (AEPRIMER/1 says "of the Army Headquarters Command Post") was a Soviet Major. An order was issued by the Soviet Military authorities that every Soviet Major was to be arrested and thoroughly investigated. This caused a panic among all the Soviet officers in the NOVOGRODEK province. All Soviet officers became suspicious. Source states that she herself saw Marshal TIMOSHENKO when he was brought to the hospital in NOVOGRODEK. He was heavily guarded and the city was heavily patrolled.

In fall of 1954, sometime after the shooting, Source hired a carpenter to repair several windows in her home. During the course of conversation the carpenter identified himself as being the uncle of the Soviet Major who had visited her. (AEPRIMER/1 states that Source was able, at this point, to recall [] because both he and AEPRIMER/1 had attended school in NOVOGRODEK together and both had visited Source's home many times). Source recalled the visit of [] and became cognizant of what up to this time she had only suspected - that the Soviet Major was one of the "American paratroopers".

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The carpenter confirmed the story Source had heard previously from the Soviet officers in her home and told her further that [] had been executed. Later a local female teacher who had been in love with [] visited Source and told Source that [] had been living in NOVOGRODEK for some time. A friend of the Source who had been in BARANOVICH at the time of the process and execution of [] told Source of the process and execution of []. [] arose at the process and instead of confessing said, "you will kill me, but the people will rise up and liberate themselves from Communist slavery. I die but in my place will come thousands". When [] was being conducted through the streets of BARANOVICH to his execution he shouted such slogans as "Long live a free Byelorussia" and "Death to Bolshevism". The trial process and the execution was a complete failure for the Soviets since the people were in sympathy with [] and many cried openly at his fate.

The officers who lived in Source's home often talked about [] and the other man who surrendered himself to the MVD, and who was pardoned and is now studying in the University of Minsk. (This is []) When Source was asked by AEPIMER/1 if she knew the identity of the man who had surrendered she could not remember it, however, when the name was mentioned by AEPIMER/1 she recalled it as being the name of the man who had given up to the MVD.

Source knew nothing more about the []. She had read none of the account as published in the Soviet Komsomolskaya Pravda. Source says that friends told her that they had read accounts in 1956 of another group of parachutists that had been captured. Source is convinced this must have been a different group and not the []. At first the feeling within the small circle of Source's friends in Byelorussia was negative towards the Americans for sending men to their certain death. The feeling was the same after people read the accounts in Komsomolskaya Pravda. This was a first feeling, later after thought, a feeling of friendship and understanding combined with pride was felt towards the Americans and people who fight for freedom and liberation, and a hatred toward Communists.

Source states another incident which may have been the work of the []. She overheard the officers living in her house speak of a case of poisoning which occurred in the Spring of 1954, in the Soviet military barracks, three kilometers from NOVOGRODEK near the village of SKRYDLEVO. Many Soviet soldiers died from eating food which had been poisoned in one of the cooking cauldrons. Investigation disclosed that the poison used must have been American since none of that type is produced in the USSR. (The poison could have been the "L" tablets which were carried in by the []).

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ATTACHMENT: 2

BROADCASTING FROM THE WEST

Source says that the people of NOVOGRODEK, in general, listen to broadcasts from the West. No many Byelorussians own good radio receivers. Some have had special radio receivers built for them with which they can use antennas that are hung down inside of wells rather than strung out in the open. Those persons who have receivers pass the news they hear on to friends who do not have receivers and in this manner almost all of the population becomes cognizant.

Listening to Western broadcasts is a political crime and punishable by imprisonment. Therefore, persons who wish to hear Western broadcasts own two radio receivers - one is known officially to everyone, the other maintained secretly. There is at least one such clandestine receiver in every village. There are many more clandestine receivers in cities.

Soviet jamming is about 50% effective. At times reception is very clear and at other times jammed to illegibility.

Source could identify only Voice of America. Regardless of the radio which is broadcasting people call it the Voice of America, or in general they say "the American radio said this or that".

Source heard only broadcasts in the Russian language. Her friends have heard broadcasts in addition, in Polish, Byelorussian and Czechoslovakian. The program most liked by the Source was a religious one given on Easter Holyday.

Source states that people would like best to have the broadcasts in the Byelorussian language since then they could understand the content better. At the present, programs in the Byelorussian language are presented but rarely and never over Voice of America. Some people are angry at the Americans for this saying like the Poles before and the Russians now, the Americans also consider the Byelorussians to be unimportant.

Listening to Western broadcasts was very popular after the death of Stalin because of relaxation of political controls. This lasted only till the uprising in Hungary. During the time of the Hungarian revolution and for some time after there was a great deal of excitement and agitation in Byelorussia and expectation that at last something would happen. That the Americans would help the Hungarians and other nations to liberate themselves and cause the destruction of Communism. Nothing of the sort occurred and the people became disappointed and angry at the Americans for giving up so easily. People said, generally, that the Americans do not want to fight Communism and naturally they will not help the Byelorussians to reestablish our independence. Because of this disappointment and out of fear of discovery and punishment many people destroyed their clandestine receivers.

Source told of an incident involving a Clerk in the Post Office in WSIELUD (12Km from NOVOGRODEK) who was in charge of the central receiver which is connected to all the loudspeakers in private homes. One night the clerk listened to the Voice of America and neglected to disconnect

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the loudspeakers. Every person having a loud speaker in his home also was able to hear the broadcast. A few days later the clerk was arrested by the MVD and sentenced to 25 years in a concentration camp.

A current anecdote; Mr. Krushchev was expediting American visitors at this office. An orderly came in and said "Comrade Krushchev your pants are not pressed well for this occasion". Krushchev answered, "How do you know?" "The Voice of American said so" the orderly answered.

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PUBLIC OPINION

Source states that in general the Byelorussian people are organzant of the national persecution directed by the Russians. They are full of hatred towards the Russians because of this and because all the decrees on national and local level come from Russians. The Russians hold all executive and other important posts in the administration beginning from the lowest one to the KISIELEV (sic). This is so in all branches and departments of the administration, in commercial and industrial establishments, schools, the militia, etc. With the exception of informers all the personnel with the MVD are Russians. As a result everyone sees and feels that he is living under foreign occupation, propaganda to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source says that in the event of war there will be an uprising against the Russians in which all Byelorussians will participate. Those who will especially participate will be the peasants who hate the kolkhozes. There will be many leaders because Source knows that many Army officers are against the regime, even though they themselves are Russians.

The Byelorussians expected and expect to gain their independence. They hoped to have some autonomy after the Potsdam Conference, which permitted the admission of Byelorussians to the United Nations, but nothing happened.

The Byelorussians have continuously expected the move for liberation to come from the West, particularly from America, but the retreat shown in the "cold war" has caused people to doubt that liberation will come soon.

At the NOVOGRODEK high school some students repatriated from Germany organized a secret organization. They obtained weapons and practised with them intending to use them in an uprising. They were discovered by the MVD and all were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. This was in 1945. Some of these have been released and have returned to NOVOGRODEK. Source's husband told Source that when he was in prison in BARANOVICHI (1946-1954) he and some other prisoners were being taken out on work details one day. While they were being walked to work they passed by an area used for training pilots. The pilots noticing the prisoners broke ranks and ran to them. Seeing the age of the prisoners and their condition the student pilots began to insult the MVD guards, asking them if they could not find more decent jobs for the prisoners etc. and promising to the prisoners that soon the day would come when accounts would be settled.

In general, young people do not want to go into Army service. They always try to avoid it, some even preferring to become deserters. Today conscripts are not called up by written notice, but instead, police come to the draftee's home and escort him to the military barracks. The same procedure is followed when reservists are recalled for reserve training.

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When Source was leaving NOVOGRODEK (1957) she visited many friends to say good-bye. These people knew she intended to go on further to America. She was told, "You go to President Eisenhower and tell him about everything, and tell him that he should not deal with the Communists, but destroy them as soon as possible, because waiting too long may be too late and America might be destroyed instead".

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CITY OF NOVOGRODEK

In 1939 population was approximately 12,000. Population as of 1957 is approximately 10,000.

NOVOGRODEK has been rebuilt quite a bit. Electricity is supplied by a power station at BARANOVICHI (60 Km from NOVOGRODEK) without restriction. In 1946, Soviets began to install a sewer system in the city. The Miskievich House-museum has been rebuilt. A big new hotel has been built for tourists, mostly those from POLAND. In the center of the city the Soviets have erected a "memorial board" (probably a war memorial). NOVOGRODEK has two restaurants, four factories and a brewery. Among the factories there is a furniture factory, a sweater factory and a cannery. There are several schools, two high schools, one Russian and one Byelorussian. A Teacher's School (Peduchilishche) and a Mechanical School for tractorists and tankists.

Two Orthodox Churches are open. All people worship. Even military personnel attend. Of two Catholic churches, one is open and one is used for storage. Generally, the people support the Priests very well, so well, in fact, that they do not know what to do with the donations.

Transportation in the city is good. Trolley buses have been introduced. There is regular bus service between the city and other towns.

The Rayon (regional) offices are located in the VOJEVOGSTVO Building.

The Passport Office is located in the city jail.

Persons convicted of crimes are taken to the jail in BARANOVICHI. There is only a detention house in NOVOGRODEK, on KZYLANSKI Street.

A Mechanical School now occupies the Palace of Justice.

The MVD and the Militia are housed on SLONIMSKI Street between the VOJEVOGSTVO Building and the closed Catholic Church.

There are some automobiles in the city but they belong to the MVD, the military and the administration.

There is one movie house and one hall for dances and meetings.

Military barracks are located 3 km from NOVOGRODEK near the village of SKRIDLEVO. There are many units based there, some commanded by Generals. Until 1956, married officers were allowed to live in the city. (Source always had several in her home). Since 1956, however, no military personnel are allowed to live in the city. At present married officers live in houses near the military barracks near SKRIDLEVO. There are 28 of these houses.

Commodity prices as of 1957 - average worker earning in 1957 was 700 rubles per month -

Veal meat - 7 rubles per kilogram

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Lard - 13 rubles per kilogram

Sugar - 9 rubles per kg

Flour - 5 rubles per kg

Shoes (pair) - 250 to 300 rubles

Suit - 1,200 to 2,500 rubles

Gasoline - 40 kopeks per litre, (sold freely)

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SOVIET INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY

Source was called many times to the MVD offices to give information about her children - three of whom are presently residing in the U.S. Mostly they asked why her children did not return to their homeland. Source's reply was that they were always disobedient in the past so how can she make them obedient and have they listen to her now?

Source was asked several times about BORIS RAGULA and NINA RAGULA (Boris's cousin). The MVD once asked Source to go to POLAND to attempt to locate NINA RAGULA. They offered a great deal of money and an escort. Source refused saying she was too old and too stupid an old woman to do that work. In her place a Mr. JOSEPH HUKO was sent to POLAND. He, however, could not find NINA RAGULA. Mr. HUKO was a Sergeant in the 65th Battalion stationed in NOVOGRODEK during the war. He was supposedly lost in an ambush between NOVOGRODEK and WSIELUB in 1944. According to Source he is alive and working for the MVD.

In the fall of 1957, the MVD called on the wife of Source's eldest son to ask her about Source's other son in the United States. The wife could give them no information about her brother-in-law. The MVD however, told her that they were aware of his emigre activities, that he was present at a Congress of the Byelorussian American Association and also that he was a candidate for a high post in that organization. (AEPRIMER/1, the de-briefer of Source states that this is correct).

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ATTACHMENT: 6

MISCELLANEOUS

The Beria Case:

Source states that a few months before Lavrentia Beria was arrested he issued an order to all landlords and superintendents of state houses to register all tenants who came from other Soviet Republics, especially those from Russia, because their posts would be filled by Ukrainians. The Russians who had good administrative positions became panicky and were filled with concern as to what this was all about and what they would do when they returned. Nothing came of this as Beria was arrested and executed before the order could be put into effect.

The Jewish Doctors Plot:

Source states that there was in actuality a Jewish Doctors Plot. Because after the arrest of the eleven doctors, mostly Jewish, all drugstores remained closed for two weeks. In NOVOCRODER, the two drugstores remained closed for that period during which time all medicines were checked and analyzed. When this was accomplished the stores were re-opened.

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